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The Hidden God: Some Remarks on Yama and the Protectors of the Sacred Space in Buddhist Art

10

Claudine Bautze-Picron

“Claudiquer, c’est donc marcher entre le visible et l’invisible, entre le connu et l’inconnu, à la fois sur la terre et dans le ciel.” (Sylvie Germain)

(A) Preliminaries

a. 1. Yama

Indian iconography basically considers images of gods and goddesses who belong to the “great” pantheon, images which are easily recognized, identified, named. However, at the edge of this pantheon, on which scholars usually focus, a large number of “secondary” deities exist, who constitute the “small” pantheon, and encompass yakṣas, yakṣīs, fluvial goddesses, couples, nidhis, nāgas, ... Distributed at the periphery of the “great” pantheon, they are also positioned at places of transition within the monument, i.e. the door- and window-frames, the pillars, the articulation between two parts of the temple, but are never, or only exceptionally, e.g. cave 2 at Ajanta, considered as main images of cult in the sanctuary or in niches distributed on the façades.

Ajanta – Such an image of transition is the representation of an odd couple positioned in the upper part of the entrance to the monuments of Ajanta (Plate 10.1),¹ which I consider to represent Yama visiting his sister Yamī/Yamunā. This visit which takes place every year, is still enacted in the reality by brothers visiting their sisters at the Yamadvitīyā, which takes place at the second day of the new moon of Kārttika, at the end of the Dīvālī.² More than any other god, Yama is probably the best positioned for symbolizing the passage between two situations, between two worlds. He was born a god, son of the Sun, but lost his divine perfection by being cursed by his stepmother. As a result, the myth tells, he was damned to limp, since one of his foot got eaten by worms, in other words he was touched by mortality.³ This tallies with the fact that this mortal god is also considered to form, with his twin sister Yamī, the original couple, and shifts thus from the world of the immortal gods to the world of the mortal human beings.⁴

At a first glance, the mutilation of Yama implies the castration of the god, punished this way for having kicked his stepmother (who had, in fact, the guise of his mother), his foot symbolizing his genitals. The god had already been confronted with another incestuous situation in hymn X.10 of the *Ṛgveda*, when he had been tempted by his sister.⁵ However, it is also possible that the wound at the foot of Yama, which introduces an asymmetry in his physical appearance, and forces him to limp, enhances his situation of transition between

two worlds.⁶ Yama is son of a god, and is himself a solar god, but his wound forces him towards a new dimension: the immortality of the gods is lost to him, a part of him becomes mortal. Moreover, when being ascribed his position of ruler of the world of the dead,⁷ he still leaves once a year his kingdom of darkness where lost souls wait for liberation in order to be received by his sister Yami/Yamunā, still a solar goddess. Thus, clearly, he moves then between two worlds.

It is thus as a complex character of transition between two opposite but complementary situations, that he is introduced at the threshold of the doors of the Ajanta monasteries, where his physical appearance undergoes a radical modification, gaining back some of his youth and energy,⁸ Yama being then simultaneously depicted as an old and disgusting cripple and as a younger and healthier figure.

Ellora, Elephanta – As a wrathful character, he is also retained in the Hindu caves of Ellora and Elephanta,⁹ either at the brackets in caves 17 or 21, or attending to the dvārapāla protecting the entrance to the shrine in caves 14 and 17 of Ellora¹⁰ and the large Sadāśiva image at Elephanta.

In this function, in particular, the attendants to the large dvārapālas in **cave 14**, are noteworthy. Let us first consider the panel carved at our left (Plate 10.3); the figure with whom we are dealing stands at the right side of the Dvārapāla and is similar to the Yama of Ajanta. With large bulging eyes, he leans on his knotty club, crosses his legs, is cripple. Moreover, he wears a large tortoise as a medallion hanging from his necklace, a motif which traces its origin back in the 5th c. and is then observed at Ajanta, and a motif which relates also to the world of the dead.¹¹ In the right panel (Plate 10.4), the dwarf figure stands also at the right side of the Dvārapāla, but he differs completely and although he is much damaged, we still recognize the awe-inspiring character, turning with violence his head upwards, looking at his master. In both panels also, this wrathful character is paired with a dwarf female, forming a type of gruesome couple encountered in the late caves of Ajanta or in other Hindu temples.

In fact, more than the frightening and forceful attendants carved in the Buddhist caves (below a.2), these figures impress through their wild and ugly expression, filling the worshipper with awe, and imparting this part of the sculptural ornamentation of the temple with a feeling of tragedy absent from the Buddhist reliefs.

Hindu Temples – The monstrous dwarf tries also to seduce the nymph at the gate of Hindu monuments from the 5th to the 7th centuries, but there he clearly has to compete with a young man, who might, in fact, be the bright aspect of himself – as a matter of fact, he is then usually depicted as if hiding behind this young man, as if arising from behind and being part of his shadow,¹² and the story is not anymore the one of Yama and Yami/Yamunā whereas the artists working at Ajanta in the late 5th c. were clearly aware of this myth and of the identity of the characters, introducing at times elements characteristic of Yama, such as the *pāśa* for instance,¹³ which appears also in the panel carved in the upper right corner of the door-frame at Nachna-Kutara (Plate 10.2).¹⁴ In both examples, the goddess holds her brother through this noose which is turned around his neck, and although I earlier suggested that there might have been a kind of irony to see Yama pulled by the noose which he himself owns for pulling the souls of the deceased, we might well consider some remarks recently made by Charles Malamoud: the bond which Yamunā ties around the neck of her brother, introduces limits around him, and more particularly between him and herself, thus underlining the prohibition of incest.¹⁵

From the 6th c. and onwards, Yama belongs to the set of the Dikpālas, where he clearly appears as the Dharmarāja, seated firmly on his throne and holding his sceptre.¹⁶ In this position, he never shows the wrathful aspect which he had at Ajanta, and had even preserved when attending to Yamunā in the traditional early mediaeval iconography of the two river-goddesses carved at the bottom of the door-jambes.¹⁷ When he appears in this position, he is named Mahākāla whereas the male figure accompanying Gaṅgā should be Nandīśa, according to texts describing Śaiva monuments.¹⁸

These various observations are not out of place when considering images of Krodhas in eastern India from the 9th c. and onwards. As we shall see below (b.1.), the visual pattern of the ugly man, which has been introduced in the 5th and 6th centuries at the gates of the caves of Maharashtra, does not disappear: as if remaining in the unconscious background, it could still be present on images as late as the 12th c.

a.2. The Krodha

The Krodha is a figure which most probably emerged in the course of the 5th and 6th centuries in the Buddhist art of Maharashtra. It is a wrathful character who possesses a very specific function, that of protecting the inner space of a *maṇḍala*. He destroys or subdues demons before bringing them, transformed, inside the inner circle, and thus creates a beneficent outer space, freed from their dark and negative influence.¹⁹ The apparently oldest existing literary testimonies are included in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, where they appear in a passage already written by the 8th c. but evidently reflecting the earlier development of the 6th and 7th centuries,²⁰ and it is most probably not due to hazard that it is precisely Yamāntaka who is the first among the Krodhas, to be historically invoked, for it is most probably also the first Krodha who emerged out of the world of the small pantheon, showing distinctive personal features.

During the second half of the 6th c.,²¹ at Ellora (cave 21) and Aurangabad (cave 6), and after 600, at Ellora (cave 6),²² a particular type of male figure emerge: the “vīra-yakṣa” or “heroic warrior type”, as named by Linrothe,²³ who is a properly built and well proportionate character. He stands in the “position of victory”, with either the left or the right leg extended,²⁴ by the side of a tall Bodhisattva-dvārapāla standing at the entrance to the shrine, with folded arms in front of the chest and the face turned upwards, toward his master (Plate 10.5).

But beside this character, two other types of attending figures are noticed. First, a figure who shares his physical aspect with the images just mentioned, and is similarly carved by the side of the large Bodhisattvas flanking the door, but is of a peaceful appearance, not crossing the arms, not stretching one leg and not presenting a frightful expression.²⁵ Second, a dwarf-like male character, named “vāmana-yakṣa” by Linrothe,²⁶ and having short legs, a protruding belly, and a large face, does not appear by the side of a Bodhisattva-dvārapāla in the Buddhist caves, but seems, in particular, to attend to Avalokiteśvara/Padmapāṇi (Plate 10.6),²⁷ and as such, can be considered to represent a first aspect of Hayagrīva, when seen in a Buddhist context.²⁸

The dichotomy between the two physical types of male attendants is already present towards around 500 A.D. at Ajanta.²⁹ Considering the large Bodhisattva in cave 1, painted at the left of the passage to the antechamber, and in which I suggested in a previous article to recognise Mañjuśrī, we should pay attention to the dark-skinned figure who accompanies him, holding a club on the shoulder, who probably is an early form of Yamāntaka.³⁰ His dark complexion and the club put aside, this character does not show any particularly threatening feature of physical distortion, and thus announces the “normal” male attending figures of Aurangabad and Ellora (types 1 and 2 above). The Bodhisattva who is painted on the other side of the passage, is most probably Samantabhadra³¹ and leans on a small attendant who carries a sword. Similarly, those painted in the antechamber, on either side of the passage to the shrine, are accompanied by small podgy characters, one being Hayagrīva, near the Bodhisattva at our left, the other one grimacing and showing bulging eyes, being perhaps the Vajrapuruṣa, near Vajrapāṇi at our right.³²

Cave 26 at the same site preserves another early representation of Hayagrīva (Plate 10.7). Like the character in the antechamber of cave 1, this figure relates to the third type noticed above, i.e. the dwarf type of Krodha. In this cave, a frieze of niches with images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas runs above the pillars all along the triforium level. On the left side, three such niches show in the centre, the Buddha seated on a throne and teaching, being attended by two Bodhisattvas carrying cāmaras, and two podgy flying garland-bearers whereas the niche at the right shows Avalokiteśvara as protector of the eight dangers, all evoked through tiny figures who rush towards the Bodhisattva, and the niche at left presents the same Bodhisattva as

a protector and holding his padma in the left hand. He is attended by a female deity, probably the Tārā, and by a dwarf-like male character who leans on a club, most probably Hayagrīva. The Vāmana-Krodha seen in cave 7 at Aurangabad (Plate 10.6) relates directly to this image at Ajanta.

The Krodha is a Buddhist figure: however, and Linrothe was well aware of it, he traces the origin of his forms in the larger religious pan-Indian background. But beyond the examples of reference which this scholar suggests, i.e. the “protective benevolent Yākṣas” who transform themselves into dvārapālas, the gaṇas of Śiva and the āyudhapuruṣas,³³ — the three of them probably justifying the visible rendering of the Krodhas at Ajanta and Ellora — their perception, in a visible context, as wrathful beings sharing the responsibility of protecting the gates of the inner religious space, be it a temple or a painted *maṇḍala*, may derive from the function imparted to Yama or the old cripple. However, the dwarf version of the Krodha who attends to Avalokiteśvara in caves 1 and 26 at Ajanta, and in cave 7 at Aurangabad, does not act as a door-keeper or does not accompany a Bodhisattva acting as such, and very clearly from the example in Ajanta 26, he bears similarities with the gaṇas carved in the lower frieze (Plate 10.7), reminding us of the “vidyāgaṇas” mentioned by the authors of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.³⁴

As a matter of fact, knowing what will be the nature and the aspect of the Krodha at a later period, it would appear that the nearest visual similarities are not really to be traced in the peaceful figures of cave 1 at Ajanta, cave 6 at Aurangabad or caves 6 and 7 at Ellora, but are rather related to the old cripple of the Ajanta caves and to the attendants of the dvārapālas of cave 14 at Ellora, and of Elephanta. The attendants to the Bodhisattvas-dvārapālas do not have the function of protecting the passage, a function which is apparently held by their respective masters. Some of them are clearly reminiscent of the āyudhapuruṣas, as reminded by Linrothe,³⁵ in particular of the cakrapuruṣa of Viṣṇu, and in some cases, half a vajra emerges out of the head-dress (Ellora, cave 6 — Plate 10.5). Thus, we have here awe-inspiring deities, but do we have already the Krodhas protector of the inner religious space ?

Very clearly, a formula was developed first at Ajanta, then at Aurangabad and Ellora, showing a tall standing two-armed Bodhisattva-dvārapāla, accompanied by a “wrathful” male character and by a female peaceful one: both are much smaller than the Bodhisattva and standing on either side. However, it is not the Bodhisattva alone who acts as protector of the door, but the entire group. This formula found its way in early images of the 8th c. in Orissa and Bihar.³⁶

(B) The Disguised Yama in Eastern India (Bihar, Orissa)

It is an evidence that when looking at the images, we tend to name them, or parts of them, through the mean of literary sources. However, it is clear that in the formative period between the 7th and early 9th c., in eastern India, the identifications and descriptions provided by later texts are far away from being satisfying, and that one faces a number of situations where one can only observe, describe and accept the evidence that there is no text allowing a proper identification of the image. The fragmentary information which has survived, in both types of material, i.e. the literary sources and the art testimonies, can be taken into consideration in the light of what we know from an earlier period and from the later period where the late Buddhist pantheon is canonised. Keeping these remarks in mind, I would like to consider two particular situations where the Krodha stands as attendant to Avalokiteśvara — and should thus, following the literary sources, be identified with Hayagrīva. However, one must go beyond this type of “simple” identification if one wants to understand why such an image can assume such a particular form as the one which we shall now consider.

First, we collected some rare examples of the Krodha having preserved, in his form, the visual pattern or features observed in the Yama images positioned at the door or at a passage at an earlier period in the caves of western India, but not in the images of figures identified as Krodhas from this region. Second, we noticed a group of early images of the 8th and 9th c. from Bihar and Orissa where the Krodha and the Preta, with whom he forms a pair, occupy a prominent position within the images, in contrast to most of the images.

b.1. The God with Crossed Legs and His Club/Sceptre

Hayagrīva and Bhṛkuṭī stand side by side in this fragment which remains from a 11th c. sculpture showing Avalokiteśvara (Plate 10.8). The podgy Krodha stands on the left foot while the right one turns around a club which has a roundish extremity, as if being a hammer. He has a broad face with bulging eyes, grimacing mouth, hair standing on ends. Another similar example is provided by an unusual window (Plate 10.9), probably from eastern Bihar, and carved in the 12th c.³⁷ It has two parts: In the upper one, the siddha Śavaripa is depicted, accompanied by two female figures. The three of them are dressed with a short skirt made of leaves or, as the literary sources say, of peacock feathers. He is depicted pulling an arrow from his quiver while his wife blows in a horn. This pot-bellied siddha, wearing matted hair, was a hunter till he was taught the Dharma by Avalokiteśvara who had appeared to him in the guise of another hunter.³⁸ A podgy Krodha stands in the lower part of the window. He has a broad face, with hair standing on their ends; the eyes are widely open, the teeth of the upper jaw are visible, he wears a beard, and displays a threatening expression. He is heavily pot-bellied, with thick arms and legs. He crosses his legs, standing on the right foot whereas the tips of the left one touches the ground behind; with the two hands, he leans on a thick stock, the extremity of which is curved. A proper look at the instrument shows that the upper part is carved as the head of an animal with a wide open mouth out of which the lower part rises. A similar club is held by Hayagrīva attending to Avalokiteśvara in a 12th c. image from Bihar.³⁹ And the club with a curved extremity is held by other images of the Krodha,⁴⁰ which appears to be a feature of the 12th c. in sculptures from the region of Nalanda.

The third example which I want to consider here is a 12th c. painted scroll from Khara Khoto (Plate 10.10),⁴¹ which belongs to a set of two paintings illustrating respectively Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra; each Bodhisattva sits on his own vehicle, the lion or the elephant, and is attended by two characters. Mañjuśrī would thus be accompanied by Sudhanakumāra and Yamāntaka, the pair who regularly attend to him in eastern India from the end of the 10th c. and onwards.⁴² Although the Krodha is here presented as a wise man, “wearing the hat of a functionary and with a *shivang* in his hand”,⁴³ we cannot fail to note the similitude between the long knotty wood stock and the shorter and irregular attribute seen in India at the same period (but see addendum).

These three examples exemplify at various degrees the persistence of a particular rendering of wrathful image, or elements of this image, without that one can trace a continuous and direct line from the images of the 5th to early 7th c. in Maharashtra up to the 11th-12th c. in eastern India and even beyond, at Khara Khoto. With their particular position of the crossed legs, and with their knotty club, the first two images differ from other Krodha figures of the period and the region, of which R. Linrothe gives an abundant illustration (for instance, here Plate 10.16).⁴⁴ As a matter of fact, the images of the Krodha in eastern India (Plate 10.16), whether seen in the company of Avalokiteśvara or Mañjuśrī and named Hayagrīva or Yamāntaka,⁴⁵ share a number of features, such as the belly, the frightening expression with the bulging eyes, the teeth, the beard, or the broad face, the hair standing on end, the snakes often used as parts of the ornaments (armlets, armbands, anklets, sacred chord,...). Very clearly, their physical appearance owes more to the image of the gaṇa or of the distorted frightening male dwarf who attends to Avalokiteśvara at Ajanta and Aurangabad than to the image of the threatening and proud god who attended to the Bodhisattva-dvārapāla at Ellora and Aurangabad, or than to the even more terrifying image of Yama at Ajanta.

b.2. The Pair Krodha/Preta

The position of the crossed legs of the two sculptures seen above recalls, nonetheless, the attitude of Yama in a number of earlier representations (Plates. 10.1-4).⁴⁶ Considering what was suggested above and earlier, in our study on Yama and Yamunā, the Krodha, whatever the name given to him by the literary sources, is shown as if hovering between two worlds. At Ajanta, where he is clearly Yama, this figure was positioned at the threshold, whereas in eastern India, he is depicted, either with crossed legs, or leaning on a

club or an axe, and thus always in a position threatened by a lack of balance. Moreover, he usually turns his head towards the Bodhisattva whom he venerates with the right hand, and all his body is thus under tension, in contrary to the other attendants of the Bodhisattva, who stand or sit in a peaceful attitude.

Within this context, I would like to draw the attention to a small group of steles carved at Nalanda, and in the region located west from the site (i.e. north of Gaya), in the 8th and 9th centuries, for they introduce probably the most vivid depictions of the Krodha. In these images (Plates 10.11-14), "Hayagrīva" is depicted as if arising from behind Avalokiteśvara: only one leg is fully depicted, the second one being deeply sunken in the back of the image.

He pays his respects to the Bodhisattva while leaning on his massive club, fire surrounds him rising out of the upper part of his body (Plates 10.12-13), and in the earlier image of the group (Plate 10.11),⁴⁷ he stands with crossed legs. Moreover, he clearly forms a pair with the Preta carved on the other side of the Bodhisattva's legs. The Preta is of a large size, much larger than in his later depictions. Besides, he is not always present whereas the wrathful image of Hayagrīva is a permanent element of the iconography of the Avalokiteśvara during all the period, thus from the 8th till the 12th c., and whereas the same Krodha can be introduced in early images of the Tārā.

That the Krodha, whatever his name, forms in that early period a pair with the Preta is, moreover, evidenced by two steles from Ratnagiri, which have been dated in the 7th or 8th c. (Plate 10.15).⁴⁸ These two images which respectively illustrate Vajrapāṇi and Avalokiteśvara/Padmapāṇi, were discovered in situ, distributed in niches in the walls of monastery 1.⁴⁹ Although it is possible to draw similarities, as far as the two Krodhas are concerned, with images from western India — see, for instance, the two hands folded in front of the chest, the position of victory, the face turned towards the Bodhisattva -, the complete schema is strange since the Preta belongs to the iconography of Avalokiteśvara/Padmapāṇi, not of Vajrapāṇi, as already observed by Linrothe.⁵⁰ And even if the artist did not know apparently how to handle the image of Vajrapāṇi since he clearly duplicated the representation of Avalokiteśvara/Padmapāṇi, just replacing the red lotus with the utpala supporting the vajra, it is very clear that both sculptures form a pair, and relate to the iconography of western India where these two Bodhisattvas attend to the central Buddha Vairocana.⁵¹ What is here relevant, however, is the presence of the prominent representations of the Preta and the Krodha — whereas on other images of Bodhisattva being attended by a Krodha from the region, the Preta is absent and replaced by a female deity.⁵² Clearly, the Krodhas on these steles from Ratnagiri, draw their visual rendering from the attendants at the door of Aurangabad and Ellora considered above, specially their forceful position of the legs, which is also their position in Bihar, although there the Krodha is seen from the front whereas here he is profiled. In these various steles, from Orissa and Bihar, the wrathful Krodha is not only depicted in what is usually considered to be a position of victory, and as a matter of fact, is held by deities who are in a situation of conquest,⁵³ but probably also of submission, throwing himself at the feet of the Bodhisattva who has become his master. His attention is drawn towards the Bodhisattva, whom he venerates with the upper right hand. The dark nature of the Krodha of the Ratnagiri images is not to be demonstrated, it is in fact very clearly expressed through his physical appearance, but one should also notice that he presents one single attribute, the noose, which is the attribute *par excellentia* of Yama. Similarly, the images from Bihar show him leaning on his club, another main characteristic of the Lord of the Dead. However, although one would expect that the other major Krodha, i.e. Yamāntaka, carries the traditional attributes of Yama, the god who he tamed, i.e. the noose and the club, it is evident that in the medieval period, the noose does not belong to his visual iconography.⁵⁴

To summarize, it would appear that this group of steles showing Avalokiteśvara (the Vajrapāṇi from Ratnagiri is an exception), from Ratnagiri and from Bihar (but centered in the region between Gaya and Nalanda), include a depiction of the Krodha which cannot be isolated from the image of the accompanying Preta: it might be a Krodha, and it is probably a Krodha, but a Krodha still clearly imbued with characteristics of Yama. It is the Krodha who has overcome the Lord of the Dead, or rather the Lord of the Dead transforming

himself into a pacified Krodha (and this is a known phenomenon, mentioned in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*). Yama is the enemy of the Bodhisattva, who owns the flask with the water of immortality, which is always held by a left hand or is carved at the proper left side of the Bodhisattva, i.e. above the Krodha/Lord of the Dead; Yama rules over the Pretas, they belong to him just like we, human beings still alive, belong to the kingdom of Māra, who is, in fact, a manifestation of the god of death.⁵⁵

On the contrary, images of Yamāntaka are not very common at an early period: in the early phase of his iconography in eastern India, Mañjuśrī is indeed usually alone,⁵⁶ before being accompanied, in the 11th and 12th centuries, by Yamāntaka forming a pair with Sudhanakumāra — just like Sudhanakumāra forms a pair with Hayagrīva in the images of Avalokiteśvara.⁵⁷ The inconstancy in the representation of the Krodha at the side of Mañjuśrī at the early period (i.e. before the 11th c.) is most probably due to the fact that the perception of the Bodhisattva did not require the presence of this attendant, in particular in the representation of the Bodhisattva seated on the lion. As seen earlier, the Bodhisattva is perceived as a teacher, a function which he assumes in particular when the Buddha Śākyamuni is seen at the moment of his Enlightenment,⁵⁸ and the image of the Bodhisattva is closely related to the site of Bodhgaya where the lion has been most probably attributed as a seat to him for the first time.⁵⁹ But Bodhgaya is also the place where Yamāntaka penetrates with violence into the field of the Buddha iconography. Let us remember that “at the time when the Teacher was demonstrating on the Diamond Seat the taming of Māra at dusk, for the purpose of taming Māra and Yama he caused Yamāntaka and retinue to manifest, as the Tantras say.”⁶⁰ And very clearly Yamāntaka stands victorious on a huge monstrous head which is painted below the Buddha at the moment of his Enlightenment, on a number of early cloth-paintings from Tibet (or still from northeast India).⁶¹

Yamāntaka is clearly a Krodha in charge of protecting the circle within which the Buddha sits: he does not destroy the enemies of the Buddha, he essentially tames them, i.e. he contributes very actively to their transformation, just like himself is a transformation of Yama/Māra.⁶² Ferocious, hostile figures turn into peaceful and tamed images who are then allowed (or rather forced) to enter the sacred circle and listen to Mañjuśrī, as the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* describes it.⁶³ Yamāntaka, the terrifying emanation of the Bodhisattva,⁶⁴ stays permanently in alert, ready to break the head of the Krodhas of the four directions who are in charge of protecting the assembly, in case they would fail in their task.⁶⁵

The Preta is a rather strange figure: he appears in Bihar in images of the 8th and 9th centuries (Plates 10.11-14). At the very same period, the ateliers of Kurkihar introduce a six-armed image of Avalokiteśvara who can be considered to be the rescuer of the lost souls - another version of this interpretation of the Bodhisattva presents him with twelve arms, such as the image from Telhara (Plate 10.14) or the earlier one from Nalanda (Plate 10.11).⁶⁶ It would thus seem that in the 8th-9th centuries, in a large area north and east from Gaya, and upto Nalanda, various ways of presenting Avalokiteśvara emerged, all concerned with his role as rescuer of the Pretas. It is very likely that this role is related to the presence, north-west of Gaya, of a hill, still named the Pretshila (Pretaśilā) or “Hill of the Pretas”, where the pilgrims coming to Gaya for the śrāddha start their way through the city. When looking at the images of “Hayagrīva” standing at the foot of his master, it is striking that he does not present himself to the spectator the way the female attendants do: they sit or stand peacefully, looking towards the devotee or slightly turned towards the Bodhisattva, but the Krodha is depicted as if he would call upon the latter. On the presently considered images, he emerges out of the back of the image, out of the darkness, out of what is not carved, of what is left unfinished or cannot be seen because it already lies in a state of decay. I am not really sure whether, again in these images, the character whom we are used to name “Hayagrīva” is the Krodha as defined by the literary sources, but whether he does not in fact constitute as aspect of Yama as lord of the dead and leaving his kingdom for arguing with Avalokiteśvara. Clearly this Bodhisattva is the one who can help the souls to be rescued from the Kingdom of Yama, and this would also account for the size of the Preta: the Krodha and the Preta are of equal size, both are images of the world of the dead.

This is the place to remind that three representations of the Bodhisattva were discovered at the Pretaśilā, a peak located 8 km. northwest of Gayā.⁶⁷ The town is a major Hindu place of pilgrimage for performing śrāddha ceremonies for one's ancestors and as already supposed by Janice Leoshko, it is probable that this position of the city bore some influence on this aspect of the Bodhisattva as rescuer of the dead souls;⁶⁸ the Pretaśilā is one of the first tīrthas of Gayā which should be visited by the pilgrims and till the early sixties, a number of Buddhist images and small caityas identified with liṅgas, used to stand along the stairs leading to the summit.⁶⁹ At the foot of the hill, there is a large tank today named Brahmakuṇḍa, which was initially known as the Pretakuṇḍa and which is probably the well mentioned by Xuanzang in the 7th c.⁷⁰ And to reinforce the relation with the world of the Pretas, one is told that archers belonging to Dharma-Yama inhabit the hill.⁷¹ The *Gayā Māhātmya* mentions also the presence of frightening Brāhmins from Yama world roaming around the hill, most probably Preta-Brāhmins but perhaps also the Dhāmins.⁷² As a matter of fact, the Brāhmins who are in charge of the vedī are named Dhāmin, i.e. they are evidently related to Dharma-Yama; the same are also in charge of the nearby Rāmśilā;⁷³ besides they are known as Pretīya brāhmaṇa, which indicates that they are particularly in charge of the Pretas.⁷⁴ Their function is indeed important since they help to transform in pitṛs all ancestors who might still be Pretas; the vedīs and tīrthas under their jurisdiction are the first to be visited by the pilgrims and by further visits of the city, it is not required any more to visit them.⁷⁵

In his study of the *Gayā Māhātmya*, Claude Jacques notices the presence of Yama in various sites distributed in the outskirts of the city:⁷⁶ he suggests that the presence of a temple of the five Pāṇḍava at Bodh Gayā, who are in fact five images of the Buddha displaying the *bhūmiśparśamudrā*, might result from the confusion between the Buddha as Dharma and Dharma as Yudhiṣṭhira.⁷⁷ Two kilometres southeast from Bodh Gayā, another vedī is located at Dharmāraṇya, a place where the king Dharma (i.e. either Yama or his son Yudhiṣṭhira) organized a great sacrifice.⁷⁸ Going back to Gayā, on the right side of the road between Bodh Gayā and Gayā, there is a large tank named Brahmasaras where further offerings are made by the pilgrim and north of it a small construction stands, where Jacques observed a small dried up well in which piṇḍas are thrown but as he mentions it, Francis Buchanan-Hamilton had noticed in winter 1811-1812, a rough representation of a character named Yama on the rock at the bottom of the actual well.⁷⁹ North of the Brahmasaras, a second smaller tank is named Vaitaraṇī after the river of the hell, kingdom of Yama.⁸⁰

To end this point, one should mention the fact that, according to the *Mahābhārata*, pilgrims used to go from Benaras to Gayā from where they walked to Rājgir.⁸¹ Whatever the reasons which integrated Rājgir, a site essentially visited by Jain and Buddhist pilgrims, to the pilgrimage, this visit implied necessarily that the pilgrims had to pass through Kurkihār or close to it, — and the site was a major site of worship of the Bodhisattva seen as rescuer of the souls. Xuanzang, as mentioned above, also visited apparently the Pretaśilā, at least he passed at the foot of the hill, seeing the well of pure water which can be drunk or used for bathing in order to purify from any sin — this could imply that at least since the 7th c., Buddhist could visit “Hindu” sites located North of Gayā where it is known that a cult was paid for the rescue of the lost souls.⁸²

Conclusion

The fate of the souls or Pretas was always of major concern in India. Damned to wander and suffer in Yama's kingdom before finding their way to the sun and becoming pitṛs or ancestors, with the help of rituals offered by their relatives, the Pretas and the tortures which they endured in numerous hells were also dealt with by Buddhist writers.⁸³ Yama, as Lord of the Underworld, preserved this position in Buddhism, just as “the worship of spirits [was] not denied or rejected by Buddha..., but rather neutralised, ousted into the sphere of cult, of natural religion. And by this, the worship of spirits finds its place as a thing naturally appropriate to all sentient beings who have not yet realised the calm state.”⁸⁴

In Bihar, and more particularly at Gaya and in the region, the Buddhists were confronted with the particular situation of this city as city of Yama, as a place where it was possible to help a Preta in becoming an

ancestor – but most probably, then, like today, the rituals making this transformation possible were in the hands of the Brahmins. This might account for the presence, though limited in time, i.e. the 8th and 9th c., and space, north of Gaya, northeast of Gaya (Kurkihar) and upto Nalanda, of a specific development of Avalokiteśvara's personality as rescuer of the Pretas. The four images presented here include a particular representation of the Preta, much larger, much more present than on any other later depiction of the Bodhisattva, and similarly, the awe-inspiring figure who stands at the Bodhisattva's left side, has a much stronger personality, reflects more presence than any other Hayagrīva image attending to his master. The Krodha is usually a rather peaceful character when he stands or sits at the side of Avalokiteśvara, but as seen above, he can preserve features which were encountered with the wrathful Yama in the post-Gupta and early mediaeval periods. I would suggest that the images of the Krodha and of the Preta, *specifically* on these images, were used as a support for addressing another issue, the conflict between the Bodhisattva and Yama who tries to defend his power, emerging out of his kingdom and arguing with Avalokiteśvara, in short the Krodha figure here would not be Hayagrīva, but Yama in the guise of the later.

Addendum

After this paper was written and on its way to the publisher, two further pieces of information came to my notice.

1. It is possible that the old person identified with Yamāntaka on the cloth-painting from Khara Khoto (here Plate 10. 10) by Pietrovsky (see here note 41), might in fact not be the Krodha, but Uten'ô, king of Khotan and protector of Buddhism as he is identified as part of a Japanese composition of the 13th c. (Washizuka Hiromitsu and Roger Goepfer, *Enlightenment Embodied, The Art of the Japanese Buddhist Sculptor (7th-14th centuries)*, New York: Japan Society, Inc., 1997, p. 130). For the same composition, but as a drawing, see : *Treasures from Diago-ji Temple*, Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum/Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc. 2001, cat. 21 p. 67.
2. The motif of the young beautiful woman accompanied by the old ugly crimple reached Central Asia and the Far East in the iconography of Vaiśravaṇa and Cintāmaṇicakra Lokeśvara who are attended by Śrī Mahādevī and Vasu Ṛṣi (Helen Chapin, "A Study in Buddhist Iconography, The six-armed from the Cintāmaṇi-cakra Avalokiteśvara, illustrated by two representations in Japanese paintings, and Śrī Mahādevī and Vasu Ṛṣi as attendants", *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, Neue Folge 8. Jahrg., 1-2, 1932, pp. 29-43, 111-29. Neue Folge 11. Jahrg., 1-2, 1935, pp. 125-34, 195-210). In this context, we would like to quote Helen Chapin (*ibid.*, p. 111): "Vasu Ṛṣi, the old ascetic, who has renounced the world, with his emaciated form, and white hair, and his scanty and coarse clothing, is the direct antithesis of Śrī Mahādevī who, the dictionaries say, is beautiful of face and form, and adorned with jewels, as becomes the goddess of good fortune, especially in its aspects of wealth, youth, beauty and love." The origins of the goddess are obscure, but Chapin (*ibid.*, p. 113 note 2) mentions a painting from Central Asia where the goddess would stand on "some sort of water-creature".

References

1. Bautze-Picron 2001.
2. Bautze-Picron 2001, p. 295 and footnote 33; Malamoud 2002, pp. 52-53. The French scholar devoted large parts of his essays to the god (see his bibliography: *ibid.*, p. 177); he also recognized how complex a personality Yama is, "much more... than the other gods" (Malamoud 1998, p. 100).
3. Bautze-Picron 2001, p. 294 & footnotes 26-29.
4. Bautze-Picron 2001, p. 293 & footnote 23. Yama's father and half-brother Śani have likewise problems with their feet: the brilliance of Sūrya was such that his father-in-law Tvasiṭi had to blind him in order to satisfy his daughter, but

he did not touch the feet of his son-in-law (Doniger 1999, pp. 45, 74, 182-3). This is shown through the fact that the god wears boots, an untypical feature among Indian gods, which has been related to the foreign origin of the Sun-god, but which also means that the god's feet cannot be displayed because they are not "normal". As a matter of fact, they have preserved, only part of the body to do so, the original brightness which is inherent to the nature of this god. The boots prevent thus from seeing this unbearable brilliance (Doniger 1999, pp. 182-3); the boots hide the feet which could not be trimmed, shaped by Tvaṣṭṛ, and which are, as a result, abnormal. It is also a curse which explains the limping of Śani, son of the second wife of the Sun-god (Bautze-Picron 2001, pp. 291-2 – with further reference), creating thus a triangular situation in which two sons of the god, each born from one of his two wives, share the same physical handicap afflicting one leg, whereas the father himself has both feet hidden.

5. Bautze-Picron 2001, pp. 293 sqr.
6. Vernant 1986, introducing this idea in the analysis of the myth of Oedipus, Doniger 1999, pp. 184-5, also suggests that "the wounded foot may stand as a metaphor for someone higher instead of (or as well as) lower, than the rest of us: the godlike artist... The wounded foot of the human artist would symbolize a kind of castration, a kind of substitution of the artistic creations of the human imagination in compensation for the loss of the animal creation of somatic offspring." Could we suggest that both the Sun and Śani or Saturn, are also gods who are permanently in movement, even more than Yama who moves regularly between his kingdom and the world of his sister? and that their "feet problem" is related to this particular situation of moving? But Doniger recalls us also that the Sun is mutilated, i.e. is mortal (1999, pp 45-46). And may be, we should listen to what artists say concerning this aspect; in a recent interview, the French authoress Sylvie Germain said, concerning the limp of Jacob after he had fought with the Angel: "Claudiquer, c'est donc marcher entre le visible et l'invisible, entre le connu et l'inconnu, à la fois sur la terre et dans le ciel." (*La Libre Belgique*, 2.12.2002). Could we then suggest that the three of them, i.e. Yama, the Sun and Śani or Saturn, who are also gods permanently in movement, are therefore always between two situations, and that their "feet problem" reflects this continuous but regular movement?
7. Bautze-Picron 2001, p. 294; Doniger 1999, p. 182.
8. Bautze-Picron 2001, pp. 308-9.
9. Bautze-Picron, in the press.
10. *Ibid.*, Plate 10. 5. For cave 14: Berkson 1992, p. 94.
11. Bautze-Picron 2001, pp. 301-5 & figs. 8-9.
12. *Ibid.*, figs. 3-4.
13. Bautze-Picron 2001, p. 290 & footnote 14, Plate 10. 3.
14. Also reproduced by Bautze-Picron, in the press, Plate 10. 3.
15. Malamoud 2002, pp. 43-46.
16. Like on the lintel from Pawaya, or in the lucarn from Bhumara (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, figs. 9, 25). See Wessels-Mevissen 2001, pp. 98-99 for a description of the god in the post-Gupta and early mediaeval period.
17. For instance: Viennot 1964, pls. 27b (Parbhau), 31d (Kaushambi), 32a-b (Gwalior – compare the attendants to both fluvial goddesses), 40a (Badoli), 44c (Chandrehi). The sculptures at Baijnath show how the wrathful nature of the god changes into a more peaceful state of mind whereas the attendant of Gaṅgā is rather similar to Yamunā's attendant – a major difference lies, however, in the nature of the attributes; the attendant to Yamunā presents not only the club terminated by a human head, but also the skull, while the other one shows the gesture of fearlessness combined to the sceptre adorned by the human head (*ibid.*, pl. 30a-b). The head or the skull tops usually the sceptre held by Yama seen as dikpāla whereas the noose seems only to be secondary (Wessels-Mevissen 2001, p. 98).
18. Viennot 1964, pp. 61-62.
19. Linrothe 1999, pp. 24-25.
20. Linrothe 1999, pp. 25-26; MacDonald 1962, pp. 25, 77-78, 99, 106.
21. Concerning the chronology, consult Malandra 1993, pp. 6-7, 23-25. As summarized by the authoress, cave 21 stands in the early group of the site and had a considerable influence on the early Buddhist caves, such as cave 6, and on the Hindu cave 14 (concerning the relation of cave 21 with caves 5 and 14, see Spink 1967, pp. 14-20).

22. Ellora 21: Berkson 1992, p. 160. Aurangabad 6: Linrothe 1999, figs. 10, 21, Berkson 1986, p. 179. Ellora 6: *ibid.*, figs. 13, 20, Malandra 1993, figs. 21, 28, pp. 27-28.
23. 1999, pp. 12-13.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
25. As a matter of fact, most of these figures still betray a peaceful attitude. At Aurangabad, cave 7: Berkson 1986, pp. 108-111; cave 6: Berkson 1986, p. 178. At Ellora, cave 6, left side: Malandra 1993, Plate 10. 33; cave 2: *ibid.*, Plate 10. 62.
26. 1999, p. 12.
27. Aurangabad cave 7: Linrothe 1999, Plate 10.12, Berkson 1986, p. 149 & p. 102 showing the location on the groundplan; the sculpture is located in the shrine, together with the Tārā, both forming a couple. Ellora cave 4: Malandra 1993, figs. 79-81; cave 3: *ibid.*, Plate 10. 70; cave 3A: *ibid.*, Plate 10. 77. Linrothe distinguishes also these three types (*ibid.*, p.37).
28. Linrothe 1999, p.37. For he is also seen in the Hindu cave 21: Berkson 1992, p. 161 where he apparently bears the spade of a sword in the head-dress, such as the vajrapuruṣa for instance, who wears half a vajra leaning on his matted hair. Moreover, he crosses the arms in front of the breast. The "Krodha-like" attendants of cave 21 are not considered by Linrothe. The dwarf-like male character holds also a prominent position by the side of the dvārapāla at Elephanta for instance, see Doniger O'Flaherty et al ii 1983, pls. 5-6 (central shrine), 10-11 (east wing shrine), 46 (shrine of the Sadāśiva).
29. Again, the Ajanta material was not considered by Linrothe.
30. Bautze-Picron 1997, p. 2 and footnotes 1-2.
31. Bautze-Picron 1997, pp. 2-3.
32. Bautze-Picron 1997, p. 4.
33. Linrothe 1999, pp. 45-46.
34. Linrothe 1999, pp. 45-47; MacDonald 1962, p. 110; Bautze-Picron 2002, figs. 36-37.
35. 1999, p. 46.
36. Linrothe 1999, figs. 30, 46, 69, 74.
37. Sothebys New York 26 March 1998, lot 44.
38. Robinson 1979, pp. 37-40.
39. Bautze-Picron 1989b, Plate 10. 20.
40. Linrothe 1999, figs. 107, 108, 117.
41. Pietrovsky 1993, cat. 50, ill. p. 210.
42. Bautze-Picron 1989a, pp. 81 & 83; Bautze-Picron 1993, Plate 10.4.
43. Samosiuk in Pietrovsky 1993, p. 212.
44. 1999, *passim*.
45. As a matter of fact, the Buddhists preserved the original couple of the twins Yama and Yamī, as recalled by a Tibetan description given by Siklós 1996, p. 183, after R. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, Graz, 1975, pp. 82 sqr.
46. Bautze-Picron 2001, figs. 1a, 2a, 4a, 5a, 6a, 7.
47. Nalanda Museum: Asher 1980, pl. 163;
48. Linrothe 1999, figs. 32-35; Mitra 1981, vol. 1, pls. CIX-A, CIX-B & pp. 159-60; Donaldson 2001, II, figs. 235 & 263 (I, pp. 197 & 218-9: second half of the 8th c.).
49. Mitra 1981, vol. I, pl. CVIII.
50. 1999, pp. 50-53.
51. Bautze-Picron 2001. And as one would expect it, Vajrapāṇi was located in the eastern niche, Padmapāṇi in the western one (Mitra 1981, vol. 1, p. 159).

52. For instance Linrothe 1999, figs. 30, 69; Mitra 1981, vol. II, pls. CCCXXXIV-C, CCCXL, or Donaldson 2001, II, figs. 229-231, 233, 236, 247, 249, 250, 253.
53. For instance Linrothe 1999, figs. 144-5, 148.
54. Which is evident from the illustration gathered by Linrothe 1999, between pp. 62 and 81, but contradicts the literary evidence where the descriptions of Yama are much more elaborate than what the art gives us to see— probably because the descriptions applied first to images which could be painted, not carved (and the ritual aim of a painted thanka differs from the purpose of a stone image). In this context, the club and the noose belongs to the Krodha (*ibid.*, p. 67 quoting the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*). Linrothe observes also (*ibid.*) the hiatus between the literary description of fierceful and terrifying image, and the rather tamed visual aspect of the god at the same period, i.e. his “phase one”. Concerning the later introduction of the club, see also *ibid.*, p. 68 and his footnote 33. As to the Hindu iconographical literary evidences, as summarised by Wessels-Mevissen 2001, pp. 15 & 17, they rarely mention the noose whereas the club is generalised.
55. Siklōs 1996, p. 179-80.
56. Bautze-Picron 1989a, p. 77.
57. Bautze-Picron 1989a, p. 83; 1989b, p. 333.
58. Bautze-Picron 1993, pp. 154-5.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.
60. Wayman 1959, p. 126.
61. Bautze-Picron 1995/96, pp. 372-3 and Plate 10. 26.
62. Siklōs 1996, p. 183. And this evolution is clearly related to Bodhgaya since Yamāntaka is a furious emanation of Mañjuśrī, himself intimately bound to Śākyamuni as “enlightened” or *buddha* whereas he assumes the complementary function of the teacher (Bautze-Picron 1993). Thus, the Krodha superimposes himself on Yama/Māra, like the Bodhisattva constitutes the active function of the Buddha.
63. MacDonald 1962, pp. 25, 78.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 26 and p. 40 footnote.
66. Leoshko 1985.
67. 1° Present whereabouts unknown (still in situ, reproduced by Jacques 1967; and recently sold by Christie’s New York, 2000, lot 18). 2° National Museum, inv. 59.92/1. (Bautze-Picron 1989b, p. 338 n°61 – with further references; Leoshko 1985, p. 135 footnote 27). 3° Present location unknown (Keith 1910, pp. 61-62 – correct “Plate 10.4” into “Plate 10. 7” – and his Plate 10. 7). And if not originally located on the hill, they might have been in the last centuries collected from the direct vicinity.
68. Leoshko 1985, p. 133. The Buddhist concern for the rescue of the souls lost in hell found its best formulation in the cult of Kṣitigarbha (Jap. Jizō) in the Far-East, see Wang-Toutain 1998. In fact, everywhere where Buddhism spread, it had to compose with major rituals of offerings made to the dead – only in India, it apparently failed. See J. Przulski as quoted by M. Stuckmann (1996) in his brilliant study of “Tantric” Buddhism in the Far-East, p. 407.
69. Jacques 1962, pp. viii-ix & passim (see the index p. 411). The Pretaśilā used to be known as Pretaparvata or Pretakūṭa, whereas the Rāmaśilā, which is located immediately north of Gayā, was then known as being the Pretaśilā (*ibid.*, but Buchanan [1936, p. 128] writes that the Rāmaśilā, used to be named previously Pretparbat). The pilgrimage of Gaya is theoretically to be done in five days; on the first day, the Rāmaśilā was visited, on the second day the Pretaśilā according to the texts whereas today the situation is inverted (Jacques 1962, pp. viii *sqr* Y li).
70. Jacques 1962, pp. xxvi, xxxiv.
71. *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv. Jacques suggests that the Dharmaprṣṭha mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* could be the Pretaśilā.
72. IV, 50 (*ibid.*, p. 122).
73. *Ibid.*, p. xi. They care for five places: beside the shrines at the top of the two mentioned hills, they are also responsible for the Brahmākūṇḍa which lies at the foot of the Pretśilā, for the Rāmākūṇḍa at the foot of the Rāmśilā,

and for the Kākaśilā, a *vedī* located south of the Rāmśilā where offerings are made to crows (*ibid.*, pp. xi, xxi, 399). Thus these priests are evidently related with two hills and their close surroundings, considered to be the world of Yama and of the Pretas.

74. *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. lxi-lxii.
76. *Ibid.*, p. lx. The god might alternatively have been named Yama and Dharma; the *Mahābhārata* mentions the presence of an image of Dharma at Gayā (*ibid.*, p. xxxiii).
77. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
78. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
79. *Ibid.*, p. xv & Buchanan-Hamilton n.d., I, p. 126.
80. Jacques 1962, p. xix. Beside, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the city is clearly related to the worship of the dead (*ibid.*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii).
81. *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv.
82. A passage of the text reminds of the eight great dangers : *ibid.*, p.188, where one offers *piṇḍas* for people having died in a tragic way, inter alia, killed by a tiger or a by an animal with horns or tusks (i.e. the elephant), burnt in a the fire of a forest, killed by thieves,...
83. See Mus 1932 concerning this aspect; the author mentions the numerous descriptions of hells, of various kinds of demons, of lost souls contained in Sanskrit, Pāli, Tibetan and Chinese sources.
84. A. Piatigorsky, *The Buddhist Philosophy of Thought: Essays in Interpretation*, London/Dublin, 1984, p. 25, as quoted by Siklōs 1996, p. 177.

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Plate 10.1 : Ajanta, cave 5, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.2 : Nachna Kutara, photo R. Skelton.



Plate 10.3 : Ellora, cave 14, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.4 : Ellora, cave 14, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.5 : Ellora, cave 6, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.6 : Aurangabad, cave 7, after Berkson 1986, p. 149.



Plate 10.7 : Ajanta, cave 26, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.8 : Vinod Kanoria collection, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.9 : East Bihar, after Sotheby's 26.3.1998, cat. 44.



Plate 10.10: Khara Khoto, after Piotrovsky 1993, cat. 50.



Plate 10.11: Nalanda, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.12: Museum of Indian Art, Berlin, photo Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin.



Plate 10.13: Indian Museum, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.14: Indian Museum, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 10.15: Ratnagiri, after Donaldson 2001, fig. 263.



Plate 10.16: Rietberg Museum, Zürich, photo J.K. Bautze.



Plate 11.1: Stone āyagaṇṇa from Vaidyer Cak, south 24 Parganas, West Bengal, depicting the ground plan of a temple complex.